RESOURCE PLANNING BRANCH

# INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING IN ALBERTA

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Resource Planning Branch
Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
8th Floor, 108th Street Building
9942-108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2J5

Telephone: (403) 427-3608

## PREFACE

During the 1970s, the need for more effective management of the province's public land and resources led to the adoption of integrated resource management and the development of an integrated resource planning process. In 1976, the Alberta Government established a province-wide integrated resource planning program to provide a comprehensive policy framework to guide the management and allocation of public land and resources. This planning program is coordinated by the Resource Planning Branch of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

It is recognized that an up-to-date description of the planning process is needed. This document provides a basic overview of the philosophy, principles and process of integrated resource planning as followed by the Resource Planning Branch. This document serves to supplement A System for Integrated Resource Planning on Public Lands in Alberta (1983).

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# 1.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## 1.1 Introduction

The Province of Alberta is endowed with abundant public land and resources. There are numerous views on how these natural resources should be managed. This range of views stems from the fact that people place different values on various uses of the land and resources. Further, it is recognized that the use of a resource for one purpose can affect both the use of that resource for other purposes and the use of other resources. The government of Alberta is responsible for managing public land and resources to provide a wide variety of benefits for Albertans. To ensure the wise use for current and future generations, the government of Alberta has adopted the philosophy of integrated resource management (IRM). Integrated resource management is a process to identify, assess and compare all resource values as a basis for making decisions on the use of public land and resources.

In order to implement this philosophy, the Government of Alberta has applied a resource planning program for public land and resources. The integrated resource planning program is coordinated by the Resource Planning Branch of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. This program provides for comprehensive land use planning program for the province's public land and resources. Integrated resource planning involves gathering information on resources and activities, and considering the views of interested government departments, municipal authorities, planning commissions, the federal government, industry, aboriginal peoples, interest groups and the public in making decisions for public land and resource management. Although this planning process has not been formally legislated, it is enabled under the Public Lands Act, RSA 1980, and the plans act as policy frameworks to guide the management, allocation and use of public land and resources.

Planning for the future use of public land and resources ensures that:

- resource management decisions reflect the views of Albertans;
- all public land and resource activities are considered before decisions are made;
- there is communication among people interested in and affected by public land and resource use; and
- public land and resources will be maintained for the future.

This paper briefly describes the history of IRM and the development of integrated resource planning in Alberta. The integrated resource planning program, the actual planning process, and the role of participants (including the public) are outlined.

## 1.2 History of Integrated Resource Management

The federal government transferred control of natural resources to Alberta in 1930. Today, the majority of Alberta's natural resources, including 62 percent of the land base, all fish and wildlife and about 80 percent of mineral resources, are publicly owned. Alberta's public land is an important base for minerals (e.g., oil, natural gas, coal, aggregates) and forest products, and for much of the tourism and ranching industries. In addition, the headwaters for the major river systems of the three prairie provinces are located on public land in Alberta. This land also provides most of the habitat for the province's wildlife and is a source of many of the recreation activities of Albertans.

In 1948, the Alberta government took two major initiatives that marked the beginning of the multiple-use approach to resource management. The first occurred when the Green Area was established to define the extent of public land that was withdrawn from settlement. For the most part, farming and residential development in this area is prohibited. The Green Area designation identifies the forested lands that are managed for multiple uses which includes forest production, water, recreation, fish and wildlife, and industrial development. White (settlement) and Yellow (agricultural expansion) areas for land allocation and management were subsequently established (although the Yellow Area was later merged into the White Area). Also in 1948, a joint federal-provincial agency, the Eastern Rockies Forest Conservation Board, was established to protect the critical headwaters region in Alberta's Eastern Slopes. To this end, the Board developed priorities and guidelines for resource management in the area.

During the 1950s and 1960s, increasing pressures on the public land base for oil, natural gas and coal development, and for more recreation and wilderness areas, resulted in the need for additional resource legislation. During the 1970s, the need for better communication and coordination among involved agencies was recognized, resulting in administrative structures and procedures being established to facilitate this need. Part of this included the adoption of an integrated resource management approach. In 1975, the government announced that a policy for integrated resource management in the Eastern Slopes would be developed, and established the Eastern Slopes Interdepartmental Committee. This committee, which reported to Cabinet, was responsible for making recommendations on an integrated resource planning approach.

In 1977, A Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes, which identified integrated resource planning as the key to effective management of natural resources in the Eastern Slopes, was approved. This Policy has since set the framework for integrated resource planning of all provincial public land and resources in Alberta. It was revised in 1984 to better reflect the current economic situation in Alberta, and to identify and provide for a greater range of values and opportunities in the Eastern Slopes.

Under Section 10 of the Public Lands Act, RSA 1980, the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife has the authority to administer public land in Alberta. Section 10 gives the

Minister the authority to "classify public land and declare the use for which he considers different classes to be adaptable". This legislation provides the authority for integrated resource planning for public land.

Although the integrated resource planning system is predominantly applied to public land, there is one special case where private land has been included in the planning process. Following a request by the Eastern Irrigation District in 1988, both private land owned by the Eastern Irrigation District and provincial public land has been included in the planning area. This unique arrangement has been made possible by the interests of the Eastern Irrigation District and the large amount of private land held by this single authority.

## 1.3 Integrated Resource Management

The Alberta government has applied the philosophy of integrated resource management to bring about wise use and management of public land and natural resources. This philosophy recognizes that the management and use of a resource for one purpose can affect both the use of that resource for other purposes and the management and use of other resources. Integrated resource management is based on:

- cooperation, communication, coordination and the comprehensive consideration of all resource values. This philosophy is centred on the belief that efforts to manage public land and natural resources will be more successful if they are coordinated at all levels within government; and

- consultation before action and shared decision making. Those people who are affected by a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

The overall intent of integrated resource management is:

**To optimize the use of provincial natural resources in order to achieve maximum net benefits for Albertans, now and in the future.**

The following definitions will help clarify the philosophy of integrated resource management:

**Integrated** - To form, coordinate or blend into a functioning or unified whole.

**Natural Resources** - The naturally occurring wealth of an area, which includes (but is not limited to) such items as land, forests, mineral deposits, and water. These resources are of actual or potential value, and meet some need of society.

**Management** - A systematic approach to decision making and action that incorporates the functions of planning, organizing, directing and controlling.

**Optimize** - To achieve the most desirable outcome from a combination of activities or actions.

**Resource Use** - The act of employing a resource for a predetermined purpose, without necessarily altering or changing that resource.

**Maximum Benefits** - The greatest net advantage to society, or the greatest enhancement of the well-being that is obtainable for society.

Integrated resource management is implemented by the Alberta government through a variety of mechanisms, including policy development, coordination and planning. The policy component of IRM is governed by a series of interagency committees consisting of senior government officials and/or members of Cabinet. In addition to approving natural resource policy, they also provide upper-level direction that reflects significant changes in policy which must be adopted.

The coordination component of IRM is conducted by way of several interagency referral processes. Several of these processes have been formalized in response to the increasing complexity of resource management issues, and are coordinated by various agencies in response to a specific legislative requirement. An example of this "shared approach" to review major private development projects is the Preliminary Disclosure Process. Through interdepartmental consultation, proponents obtain feedback at the early stages of a project's design, which includes the identification of any policy impediments. These policy impediments may result in an objection in principle from the reviewing agencies, or may simply be identified as issues that must subsequently be dealt with during the more detailed design and implementation stages.

The planning component of IRM is conducted through a number of planning mechanisms, which includes the interdepartmental coordination of integrated resource plans. A discussion of the Alberta government's integrated resource planning process makes up the majority of this discussion paper. The other planning processes in the province are briefly outlined below.

## 1.4 Other Land and Resource Planning Systems

Several other types of land and resource planning systems exist in Alberta at the municipal, provincial and federal government levels. These include local planning conducted by municipal governments, regional land use planning conducted by regional

planning commissions, water resources planning conducted by Alberta Environment, and park planning for provincial and national parks. In order for the integrated resource planning process to be effective, it must be carefully coordinated with the other relevant planning processes. To this end, the private land planning process and the water resources planning processes are of greatest importance.

The Planning Act provides for the planning and regulation of land uses and patterns of human settlement. Most private development, whether on privately owned or public land, falls under the jurisdiction of the Planning Act and its regulations, plans and bylaws. Instruments under the Planning Act include regional plans, general municipal plans, area structure plans, area redevelopment plans and land use bylaws. Coordination between provincial government and local authorities is essential to ensure that the intents and contents of instruments under the Planning Act and integrated resource plans are consistent with one another. Although integrated resource plans typically apply only to public land and resources and have no legal status, they do represent government policy.

The use and management of water in Alberta is regulated through arrangements primarily under the Water Resources Act and the Clean Water Act[1]. Planning for the management and use of this resource must acknowledge the vital role of water in the economic and social development and the quality of life of Albertans. It is desirable that water resource planning and land use planning on the regional and provincial scales be carried out within the same framework. To this end, extensive consultation occurs to ensure water management objectives are incorporated correctly into integrated resource plans.

## 2.0 INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING

### 2.1 Purpose

Integrated resource planning acts as a mechanism through which the Alberta government applies its philosophy of integrated resource management. Integrated resource planning is intended as a policy framework within which decisions are made regarding public land and resource allocation. This planning process identifies concerns and interests, and ensures they are considered in the land and resource allocation decisions for public land and resources throughout the province. Integrated resource planning attempts to ensure:

- a balance among resource protection, conservation and development; and
- the maintenance of public land and resources for the future.

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[1] The Clean Water Act is being incorporated into the proposed Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.

Integrated resource plans (IRPs) apply to all lands and natural resources under provincial jurisdiction. The plans guide the provincial government in making use decisions (e.g., granting dispositions) on the use of public land and resources. In addition, they help to clarify to industry and the public the government's direction for future management of public land and resources. The natural resources commonly addressed in integrated resource plans include agricultural (till crops and range), ecological, fisheries, historical, minerals (oil sands, oil, natural gas, coal and others), surface materials, timber, water and wildlife resources. Activities include access, recreation, tourism and settlement.

## 2.2 Principles of Integrated Resource Planning and Public Involvement

Seven fundamental principles are integral to the integrated resource planning program (which includes the public involvement program). These principles are consistent with the underlying philosophy of integrated resource management. The integrated resource planning process is structured to support these principles and operate according to them. The principles, which are described below, provide a basic description of what the Resource Planning Branch strives to achieve through the planning process.

1. Integrated resource planning must be **procedurally fair**. Everyone who will be affected by a decision should have the opportunity to participate in the resource management decision-making processes. Those responsible for the management of public land and resources can participate as committee members to review plans, and/or as planning team members to develop the plans. Others who are interested can provide input to the planning team. Public involvement is a fundamental component in the development of each integrated resource plan.

2. Integrated resource planning must **ensure open communication.** There are many government agencies, industries, groups with various resource interests and concerns, and individuals who require public land and resources in order to meet their needs (e.g., livelihood, recreation). Therefore, all interested parties must have the opportunity to influence resource management decisions. Public involvement should begin early in the resource management decision-making processes, and be continuous throughout the life of the plan.

3. Integrated resource planning must **encourage shared decision making,** whereby every attempt is made to reach **consensus**. This allows all stakeholders the opportunity to provide information, review government objectives and influence decisions. Consultation must take place before action is taken, and compromises may be required to achieve decisions by consensus. This results in better decisions, which are supported by those involved. Consensus is viewed as being a general agreement, but does not necessarily reflect unanimity. The dissenting views are documented before decisions are finalized. The final decision rests with the provincial cabinet.

4. Integrated resource planning must be **rational**. It must be based on the best available information from many sources and work through the identification of needs and objectives. It also should look at alternatives to define the best way to achieve the agreed-upon objectives and define the actions required to implement the decisions. The decision-making process ensures that resource management issues are resolved through a series of steps, which are: collecting information; choosing appropriate action to meet objectives; and implementing decisions.

5. Integrated resource planning must be **comprehensive**. It is recognized that the management of a resource for one purpose can influence both the use of that resource for other purposes and the management and use of other resources. Therefore, an interdisciplinary approach should be taken in the management of public land and resources. This includes the consideration of economic, social and environmental objectives. A comprehensive approach is necessary in order to consider the full range of natural resources, interests and values. A hierarchial framework ensures that all levels of decision makers participate, and that effective and efficient decision making occurs at the appropriate level for each issue.

6. Integrated resource planning must be **dynamic and flexible**. It should respond to changing needs and circumstances, both during the development stages and in the future when revisions or amendments are needed. It should be tailored to suit issues and circumstances of the planning area. Integrated resource planning is a continuous, often repetitive process of decision making. The methods used to involve the public are designed for specific situations in order to accommodate the widest possible interests.

7. Integrated resource planning must be **impartially coordinated**. Varied interests exist among parties involved with natural resource interests (i.e., government agencies, industry, groups and individuals). Coordination of decision making must therefore create an impartial environment, facilitate decision making and mediate between parties. This cannot be accomplished if the coordinating body has a vested interest in the outcome of decisions.

## 2.3 Integrated Resource Planning Program

To ensure that public land use and resource allocation decisions are made in a comprehensive and consistent manner throughout the province, a long-range planning program was established in 1976. This Integrated Resource Planning Program is coordinated by the Resource Planning Branch of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

Planning activities are carried out at regional, subregional and local levels. Provincial-level direction is supplied through the development of departmental policies, objectives and guidelines. A Policy for Resource Management of the Eastern Slopes,

Revised 1984 is an example of provincial-level policy applied to a regional area. As noted above, it established the framework for integrated resource planning for all public land and natural resources. It contains both a resource management policy and elements of a regional plan.

Regional-level planning is based on the five administrative regions of the Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. A mapping scale of 1:250 000 to 1: 1 000 000 is commonly used at this broad level of direction. Regional-level plans provide for a general allocation of public land and natural resources towards meeting provincial goals, establish a regional policy framework and identify planning priorities within the region. Subregional-level planning is a refinement of regional-level planning, and includes more refined zoning, objectives and guidelines. A scale of 1:100 000 is commonly used in these plans. Local-level plans are developed for smaller geographic areas. They deal with specific resource conflicts or problems that merit special attention. This is the most detailed level of decision making in the integrated resource planning program, and commonly occurs at a scale of 1: 20 000. Regardless of the scale of the planning, all levels follow the same integrated resource planning process.

Each Regional Resource Management Committee (RRMC) establishes priorities for the subregional and local integrated resource plans within their region for a standing three year period. The Resource Integration Committee (RIC) sets provincial priorities for the long-range planning program for the Resource Planning Branch, which is approved by the department's Executive Committee (the various committees will be described in subsection 2.7). Planning priorities are reviewed on an annual basis and are based on the location of resource management issues, activities and opportunities in the province. A long range planning program map displays the location of the various levels of planning (Figure 1).

## 2.4 Integrated Resource Planning Process

The integrated resource planning process is built on three fundamental elements: gathering information, making choices and taking action. More specifically, the process consists of a series of five steps (Figure 2). Although the steps occur in order, there is flexibility to return to an earlier step when required. The planning documents are reviewed and approved by a series of interdepartmental committees. The planning process may take a considerable amount of time to complete, because the land use and resource issues are complex and adequate time is needed to consult with all interested participants.

The following are the five steps of the planning process.

### 1. Initiating the Plan

Based on the planning priorities set for the integrated resource planning program, the Resource Planning Branch initiates the IRP as resources become available. The

# LONG RANGE INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING PROGRAM

## EASTERN SLOPES REGION A

EASTERN SLOPES POLICY (C) *

**SUBREGIONAL PLANS**

- A1 FOX CREEK-KNIGHT (P)
- A2 WHITECOURT-BLUE RIDGE (F)
- A3 SWAN HILLS-FT ASSINIBOINE (F)
- A4 BERLAND (P)
- A5 WILLMORE WILDERNESS PARK (F)
- A6 YELLOWHEAD NORTH (F)
- A7 COLD CREEK (F)
- A8 COAL BRANCH (C)
- A9 BRAZEAU-PEMBINA (C)
- A10 ROCKY-NORTH SASKATCHEWAN (C,A)
- A11 NORDEGG-RED DEER RIVER (C)
- A12 GHOST RIVER (;)
- A13 KANANASKIS COUNTRY (C)

**LOCAL PLANS**

- A101 ATHABASCA RIVER SANDHILLS (P)
- A102 DAVID THOMPSON CORRIDOR (P)
- A103 BOW CORRIDOR (P)

## PEACE RIVER REGION B

PEACE RIVER REGION REGIONAL PLAN (P) *

**SUBREGIONAL PLANS**

- B1 HAY-ZAMA (F)
- B2 WATT MOUNTAIN (F)
- B3 CARIBOU MOUNTAINS (F)
- B4 JEAN D'OR PRAIRIE (C)
- B5 MIKKWA-LOWER PEACE (F)
- B6 NOTIKEWIN (F)
- B7 KEG RIVER (C)
- B8 BUFFALO HEAD HILLS (F)
- B9 EAST PEACE (F)
- B10 RED EARTH (F)
- B11 PEERLESS-GRAHAM (F)
- B12 WABASCA (F)
- B13 SADDLE HILLS (F)
- B14 STURGEON LAKE-PUSKWASKAU EAST (C)
- B15 HEART RIVER (F)
- B16 UTIKUMA (F)
- B17 NORTH SWAN HILLS (F)
- B18 KAKWA-WAPITI (F)
- B19 SMOKY-SIMONETTE (F)

**LOCAL PLANS**

- B101 UPPER PEACE VALLEY (C)
- B102 LOWER PEACE VALLEY (C)
- B103 SMOKY-PEACE POINT (C)
- B104 GRANDE PRAIRIE COUNTY WEST (C)
- B105 WAPITI-GRANDE PRAIRIE SAND DUNES (C)
- B106 BEAR RIVER-WAPITI (C)
- B107 FROST HILLS (C)

## NORTHEAST REGION C

NORTHEAST REGION REGIONAL PLAN (P) *

**SUBREGIONAL PLANS**

- C1 FT. FITZGERALD (F)
- C2 CANADIAN SHIELD (F)
- C3 BIRCH MOUNTAIN-FIREBAG (F)
- C4 FT McMURRAY-ATHABASCA OIL SANDS (P)
- C5 WINEFRED LAKE-PELICAN PORTAGE (F)
- C6 WANDERING RIVER-SMOKY LAKE (F)
- C7 BIG BEND (C,A)
- C8 LAKELAND (C,M)
- C9 COLD LAKE (P)

**LOCAL PLANS**

- C101 BEAVERHILL LAKE (C)

## CENTRAL REGION D

CENTRAL REGION REGIONAL PLAN (P) *

**SUBREGIONAL PLANS**

- D1 RED DEER RIVER CORRIDOR (F)

**LOCAL PLANS**

- D101 WHITE AREA FRINGE (F)
- D102 EDEN VALLEY (C)

## SOUTHERN REGION E

SOUTHERN REGION REGIONAL PLAN (P) *

**SUBREGIONAL PLANS**

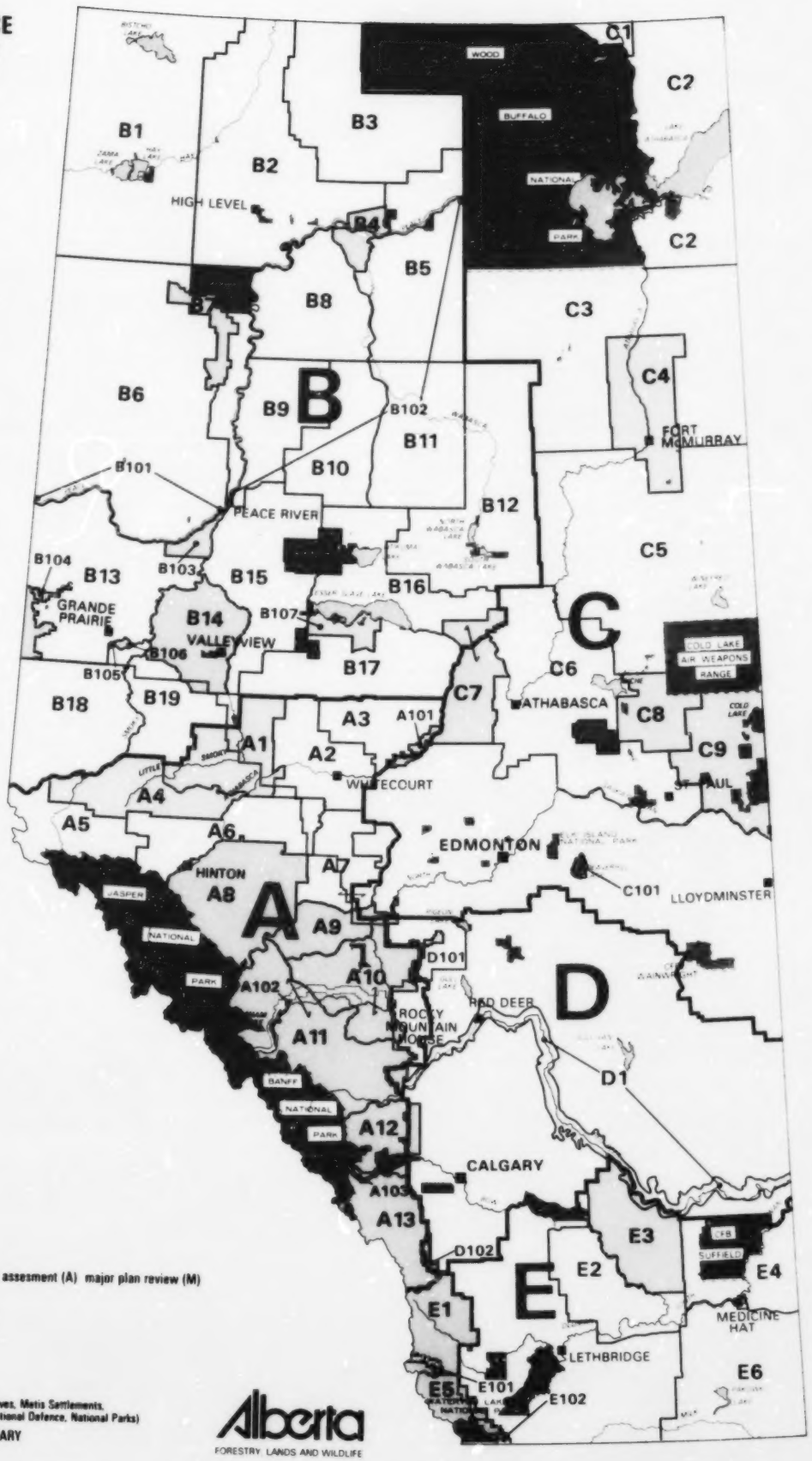
- E1 LIVINGSTONE-PORCUPINE HILLS (C)
- E2 OLDMAN-BOW (F)
- E3 EASTERN IRRIGATION DISTRICT (P)
- E4 CYPRESS NORTH (F)
- E5 CASTLE RIVER (C)
- E6 PAKOWKI-CYPRESS SOUTH (F)

**LOCAL PLANS**

- E101 CROWSNEST CORRIDOR (C)
- E102 POLL HAVEN (C)

completed (C) in progress (P) future (F) 5 year assesment (A) major plan review (M)

* see reverse for regional planning map




COMPLETED PLANS

IN PROGRESS PLANS

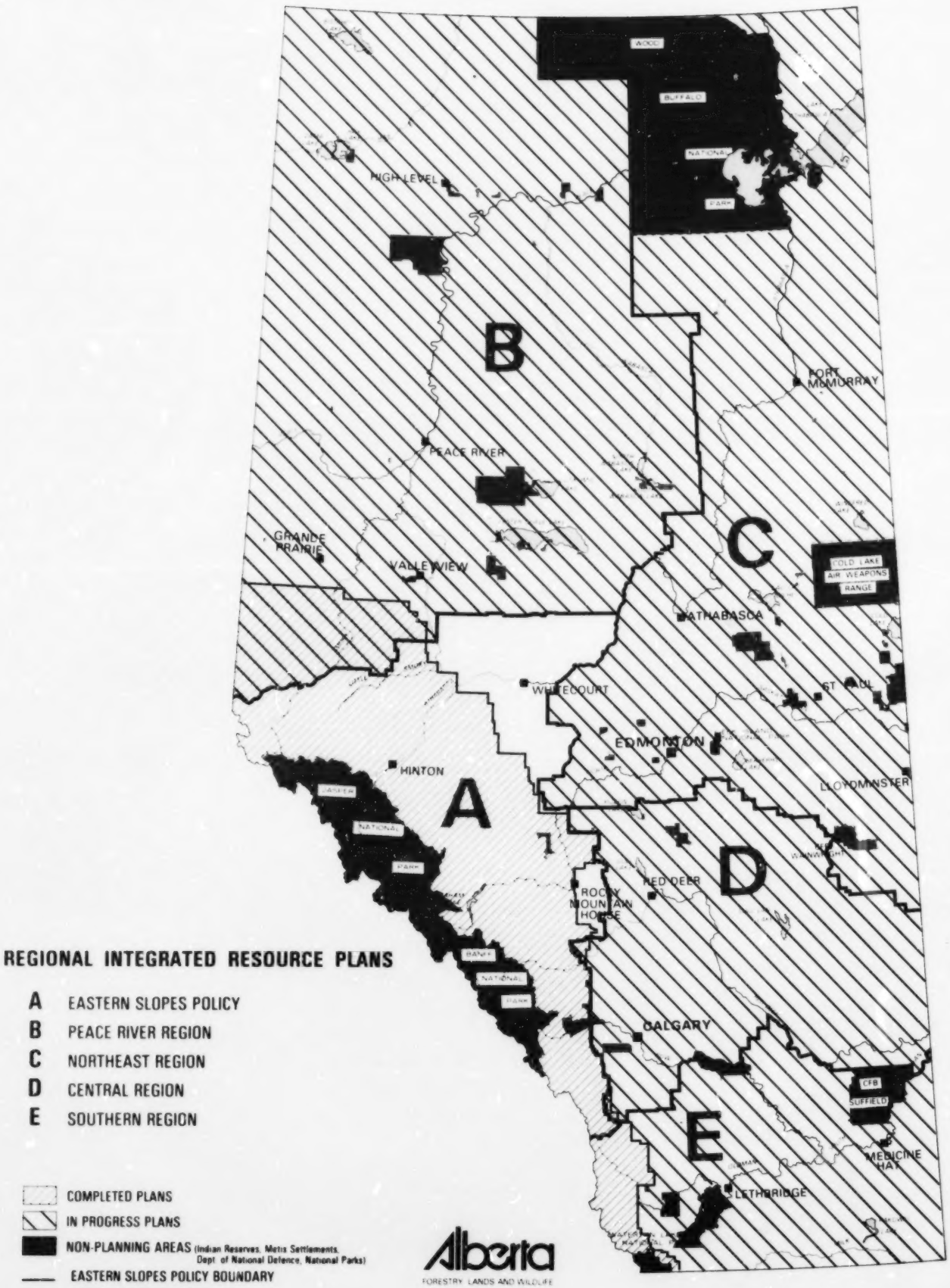
NON-PLANNING AREAS (Indian Reserves, Metis Settlements, Dept. of National Defence, National Parks)

EASTERN SLOPES POLICY BOUNDARY

REGIONAL BOUNDARIES

Alberta
FORESTRY, LANDS AND WILDLIFE

September 1991




## REGIONAL INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANS

- **A** EASTERN SLOPES POLICY
- **B** PEACE RIVER REGION
- **C** NORTHEAST REGION
- **D** CENTRAL REGION
- **E** SOUTHERN REGION

COMPLETED PLANS

IN PROGRESS PLANS

NON-PLANNING AREAS (Indian Reserves, Metis Settlements, Dept. of National Defence, National Parks)

EASTERN SLOPES POLICY BOUNDARY

REGIONAL BOUNDARIES

Alberta

FORESTRY, LANDS AND WILDLIFE

# OVERVIEW OF THE INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLANNING PROCESS

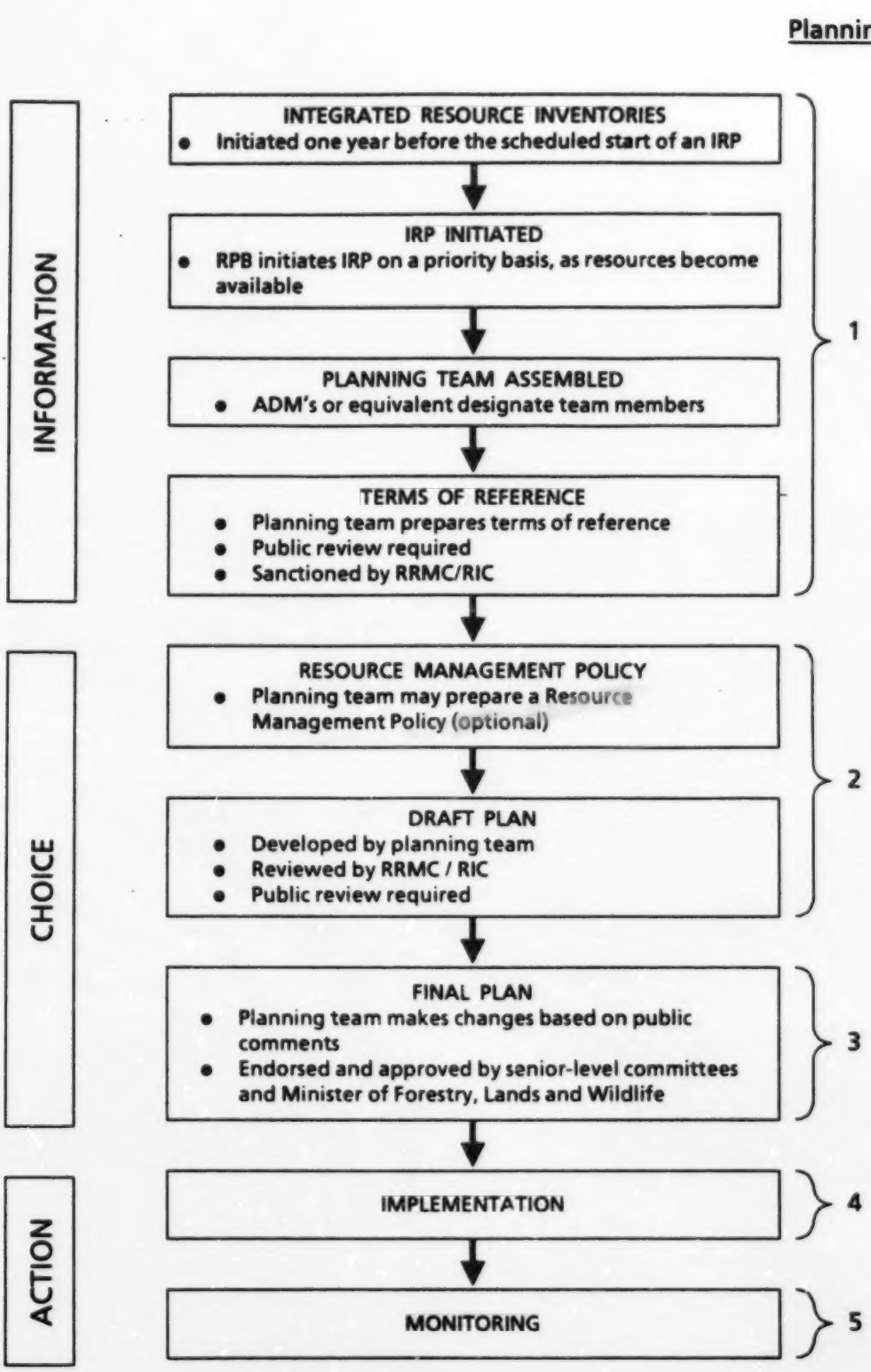

Planning Steps
INFORMATION
CHOICE
ACTION
INTEGRATED RESOURCE INVENTORIES
• Initiated one year before the scheduled start of an IRP
IRP INITIATED
• RPB initiates IRP on a priority basis, as resources become available
PLANNING TEAM ASSEMBLED
• ADM's or equivalent designate team members
TERMS OF REFERENCE
• Planning team prepares terms of reference
• Public review required
• Sanctioned by RRMC/RIC
1
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICY
• Planning team may prepare a Resource Management Policy (optional)
DRAFT PLAN
• Developed by planning team
• Reviewed by RRMC / RIC
• Public review required
2
FINAL PLAN
• Planning team makes changes based on public comments
• Endorsed and approved by senior-level committees and Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
3
IMPLEMENTATION
4
MONITORING
5

Figure 2

Assistant Deputy Minister (or equivalent) of interested agencies assigns planning team members to the planning project. A team coordinator from the Resource Planning Branch is assigned to lead the team in development of the plan.

Relevant information, such as ecological land classification studies and base maps for the planning area, are completed to assist the planning team in preparing the plan.

The planning team then prepares a draft terms of reference for the plan. This document identifies who will participate in the project; what concerns, issues and opportunities will be addressed and what will be achieved; the planning area boundaries; and how the plan will be developed. It also includes an approximate time frame for the planning process. The draft terms of reference are then reviewed by the public and revisions are made based on the comments received. The terms of reference are then sanctioned by the Regional Resource Management Committee and approved by the Resource Integration Committee.

2. Developing the Plan

The team compiles and analyses the best available information on resource capabilities, current use, demands, resource potential and resource use conflicts. The information is used to identify issues and opportunities and resolve conflicts. A resource management policy, which outlines broad objectives and proposed zoning schemes, may be completed to provide interim direction (an optional step in the planning process). A draft plan is then prepared by the planning team, which includes recommendations on how resources and activities should be managed and developed. The draft plan includes resource management intent statements, objectives that describe what is to be achieved, and guidelines that state how the objectives will be attained. Maps that detail the land allocation through zoning are developed and are included along with a discussion of how the plan will be implemented. Draft plans are endorsed by the Regional Resource Management Committee and Resource Integration Committee prior to public review (except for local IRPs which are normally endorsed by the Regional Resource Management Committee). The draft plan is then reviewed by the public and their comments and a summary of the public input is compiled.

3. Finalizing the Plan

The team prepares the final plan with consideration of the public input. If outstanding conflicts persist, they are addressed by senior interdepartmental committees. The final plan is then approved by the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife and/or the Economic Planning Cabinet Committee. Unless they are of major provincial importance, local integrated resource plans normally receive the final approval from the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife. Subregional and regional integrated resource plans are approved by the Economic Planning Cabinet Committee. Plans are approved only after consultation with the local Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Once approved,

the plan becomes the government's resource management policy for the planning area's public land and resources.

4. Implementing the Plan

An implementation document is prepared by the RRMC for subregional and local-level plans so, once approved, the plans can be put into action by resource managers. This document identifies the responsibilities of government staff, specifies the lead roles, identifies activities that are already under way, establishes priorities for the initiatives and identifies budget requirements. Implementation documents provide direction to government agencies as they work towards planning objectives using guidelines set down in the plan.

5. Monitoring the Plan

Amendments are made to the plan as required. The RRMC reviews progress annually and a major assessment of the plan occurs every five years, or as needed. Public review of any proposed amendment may also occur. The annual report generally outlines the progress made in carrying out initiatives identified in the plan, and lists amendments requested or made. Plan amendments can be initiated by government agencies, industry, the general public or special interest groups. They can include changes to planning area boundaries, resource management area boundaries, or objectives or guidelines. If necessary, a five-year assessment is undertaken to identify all amendments and generally assess the plan's relevancy. If it is deemed no longer relevant because of changes in society's values, resource management or other direction, a major plan review is undertaken.

## 2.5 Participation in Integrated Resource Planning

While there are varying levels of involvement, opportunities exist for everyone to participate in the development of IRPs. Participation is dependent on both the amount of responsibility held in association with public land and resource management, and the degree of interest displayed by the interested party. In addition, a degree of flexibility exists for the level of participation in each IRP and for each participant. Expressing your interest in participating (self-identification) is an important tenet for participation in the integrated resource planning process.

Participants in the process are divided into two general categories:

1. Provincial government participants;
2. Nonprovincial government participants.

### 2.5.1 Provincial Government Participants

#### Planning Teams

The responsibility to complete IRPs lies with the provincial government. Provincial government agencies that have a legislative responsibility to manage or allocate public land or resources, or are affected by or can influence resource management decisions within the planning area, are invited to appoint a planning team member. A resource manager or planner with the knowledge and skills to deal with the planning area issues is appointed by each provincial agency. The planning team members represent the resource interests of their provincial government agency throughout the planning process. The provincial government agencies that commonly participate in the integrated resource planning process include, but are not limited to:

- Alberta Agriculture
- Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism
- Alberta Economic Development and Trade
- Alberta Energy
- Alberta Environment
- Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife
  - Fish and Wildlife Division
  - Land Information Services Division
  - Public Lands Division
  - Forest Industry Development Division
  - Alberta Forest Service
- Alberta Municipal Affairs
- Alberta Recreation and Parks
- Alberta Tourism
- Alberta Transportation and Utilities
- Energy Resources Conservation Board
- Environment Council of Alberta

Other provincial government agencies may be sanctioned by senior management to participate as team members if this will result in a better planning product.

For the team to function, participants must consider all resource concerns, not just their own, and be willing to make trade-offs. It is incumbent on agencies with interests in IRPs to participate early in the planning process and actively at the team level. Where possible, teams are kept small for efficiency and effectiveness. Team members must be prepared to commit considerable time to the process on an ongoing basis. Based on the time commitment and the level of interest of the agency, planning team members can identify themselves as either *core* or *extended* members. The difference between these two categories is based almost entirely on the level of interest in the planning area and whether the team member will attend most of the team meetings (core), or only meetings where

issues of interest are being addressed (extended). Staffing limitations in provincial agencies also have a significant influence on the level of attendance. Active participation of all team members is encouraged to ensure that issues are fully explored and resolved, and that integration is achieved for all resource sectors and activities.

Whether core or extended, all planning team members are kept informed of the planning team business and receive copies of all meeting minutes, draft planning documents and all other information. All team members are responsible for providing input to the decision-making process in a timely manner.

Planning Team Coordinator

A resource planner from the Resource Planning Branch coordinates the activities of the planning team, ensuring that team members provide the necessary information and directing the team toward developing a quality product. It is the team coordinator's responsibility to act impartially and to guide the planning process according to the principles of integrated resource management. The coordinator leads the team through the steps of the planning process, including the public involvement program, represents the team at various interdepartmental committee reviews, and prepares the documents associated with each step of the planning process.

Interdepartmental Committees

A hierarchy of interdepartmental committees provides direction to the planning team. The committees interpret policy, resolve conflicts, and review and endorse documents. The strength in the committee structure lies in the commitment of its members to openly discuss resource management issues of common concern, and to seek resolutions that are acceptable to all. The structure permits the upward flow of technical information and planning and management proposals from natural resources management professionals, and the downward flow of direction to resolve complex issues. All committees have the power to endorse documents and make recommendations, but only the Minister or the Economic Planning Cabinet Committee can approve documents. Subsection 2.7 outlines the roles of the interdepartmental committees.

### 2.5.2 Nonprovincial Government Participants

The planning process provides opportunities for nonprovincial government agencies, interest groups and individual citizens who do not have a direct (i.e., legislated) public land or resource management mandate, to provide input and influence decision making on the best use and management of public land and resources. Planning teams seek opinions from all interested and affected parties.

Some agencies have a mandate based in legislation (e.g., The Planning Act) that is related to or affected by the management of public land and natural resources. These agencies include local governments (such as urban municipalities, counties, improvement districts, municipal districts and special areas), regional planning commissions and the federal government (commonly includes the Department of National Defense, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and the Canadian Parks Service). Aboriginal peoples also have a special relationship with the land through their traditional use of the land and resources. These groups may be very active in participating with the planning team. Based on self-identification, these groups are kept updated on the progress of the plan, have access to information, may be invited or requested to provide input on issues of interest to them, and given the opportunity to provide input or review documents prior to public review.

The general public includes all interested people, groups and industry that wish to become involved in the planning process. Public involvement is an important component of the integrated resource planning process, and self identification is fundamental to the level of participation. Through the public involvement process, the planning team listens and responds to the concerns of the public, and the public can influence decisions made in the plan. The aim of the planning team is to be flexible, so the specific approaches and amount of public involvement vary from plan to plan, depending on the level of interest and specific needs of both the public and the planning team. For example, if any member of the public displays interest in the planning area, they have the opportunity to directly communicate their views to the team at any time during the planning process.

## Purpose of the Public Involvement Program

Public involvement occurs early in the development of a plan and is continuous through the preparation and implementation stages. The techniques and opportunities vary depending on the stage of the plan (e.g., terms of reference, draft plan, implementation, etc.). Based on the principles of integrated resource management and the basic principles of public involvement, the public involvement program associated with the integrated resource planning process offers the public the opportunity to raise issues, provide input and suggest solutions to ensure that the plan reflects the views of Albertans. Two-way communication is fundamental to the public involvement program. The program can also be tailored to suit the issues and circumstances of each IRP. It seeks a full range of opinions by encouraging the involvement of all interested and affected parties (i.e., individuals, interest groups and associations, industries). This allows people to understand the needs and wishes of others and encourages discussion on overlapping interests. It helps develop mutual respect among those affected, and acceptance of the need to compromise on different issues.

## Participation in Plan Preparation

Public involvement can best influence decision making at key stages during plan preparation (i.e., draft terms of reference and draft plan), but public input is welcomed at

any time. People are encouraged to participate during scheduled public events such as during review of the draft terms of reference and the draft plan. These documents are then revised based on the public input. Public events usually include open houses, information exchange sessions and round-table meetings, although workshops and informal meetings may also be held.

Before each event, information is distributed to the public in the form of flyers, newspaper articles and planning documents. At each event, people are encouraged to voice their concerns either in writing or by talking to the team representatives/panel members. After each event, the public receives a copy of the public input summary report, which summarizes the comments received from the public and acts as a record of the various opinions held by the public. This report is considered by the planning team in revising the plan and is made available to interdepartmental review committees, the local MLA and the Minister.

The public is kept informed of the plan's progress through regular "Planner's Updates", i.e., correspondence from the team coordinator to those on the mailing list. Copies of the approved plan are also available to the public.

Participation in Plan Implementation and Monitoring and Assessment

The public can also participate in the plan review and amendment process. An annual report on the plan is available to the public upon request. Five-year assessments are conducted on completed plans to determine if they are still relevant to resource management agencies. If the plan requires substantial changes, a major plan review is conducted. This type of review requires public involvement similar to the public review involved in developing integrated resource plans. Opportunities for public review of proposed major amendments are provided before changes are approved by the government.

## 2.6 Advisory Committee

To ensure that the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife received direct input from the public, the Alberta Integrated Planning Advisory Committee was formed in 1981. The mandate of this public advisory committee was to provide advice to the Minister on broad policy and program matters relating to integrated resource management and planning for Alberta's public land and resources. This committee was made up of representatives of various public groups. In 1991, this committee was replaced by the Forestry, Lands and Wildlife Advisory Committee, which has the broader mandate of providing advice on all areas of responsibility for the department. The membership has also been expanded to involve a more comprehensive range of public groups.

## 2.7 Roles of Interdepartmental Committees

The following is a description of the roles of committees participating in the integrated resource planning system (Figure 3). Most of these committees address a number of issues aside from the integrated resource planning program.

### 1. Regional Resource Management Committee (RRMC)

There are five Regional Resource Management Committees (RRMCs) composed of regional directors from agencies with public land and resource-related interests. Agency representatives participate on RRMCs when issues are discussed that involve resources within their jurisdiction. The RRMCs are chaired by regional resource coordinators who provide coordination services within the five administrative regions of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife.

These committees have the following duties: identify regional planning priorities; monitor plan development in the regions; review and endorse local integrated resource planning documents for public review in most cases except where issues are provincial in scope; review and endorse all other documents for recommendation to the Resource Integration Committee; provide direction to planning teams; and represent the government at public meetings. The RRMC also coordinates the implementation of approved IRPs, including periodic assessments, ensures the plans are kept up-to-date, monitors their effectiveness, coordinates changes to plans and keeps the public informed. The RRMC is the first level of review for IRPs.

### 2. Resource Integration Committee (RIC)

The Resource Integration Committee (RIC) is a head-office, director-level, interdepartmental committee representing agencies with public land or resource-related responsibilities. It is chaired by the Director of the Resource Planning Branch.

This body is the primary steering and coordinating committee for the Integrated Resource Planning Program. It identifies provincial planning priorities; monitors the progress of the planning program; addresses concerns that cannot be resolved by the planning team or RRMC; recommends planning programs and provides broad policy-level direction and interpretation to the planning teams; reviews and endorses documents for public review (except local integrated resource plans which are normally endorsed for public review by the RRMC); and endorses and recommends plans to the assistant deputy minister committee level. The RIC is the second level of review for IRPs.

### 3. Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC)

The Natural Resources Advisory Committee (NRAC) consists of assistant deputy ministers from agencies with responsibilities for the administration or management of public

# DRAFT PLAN APPROVAL PROCESS

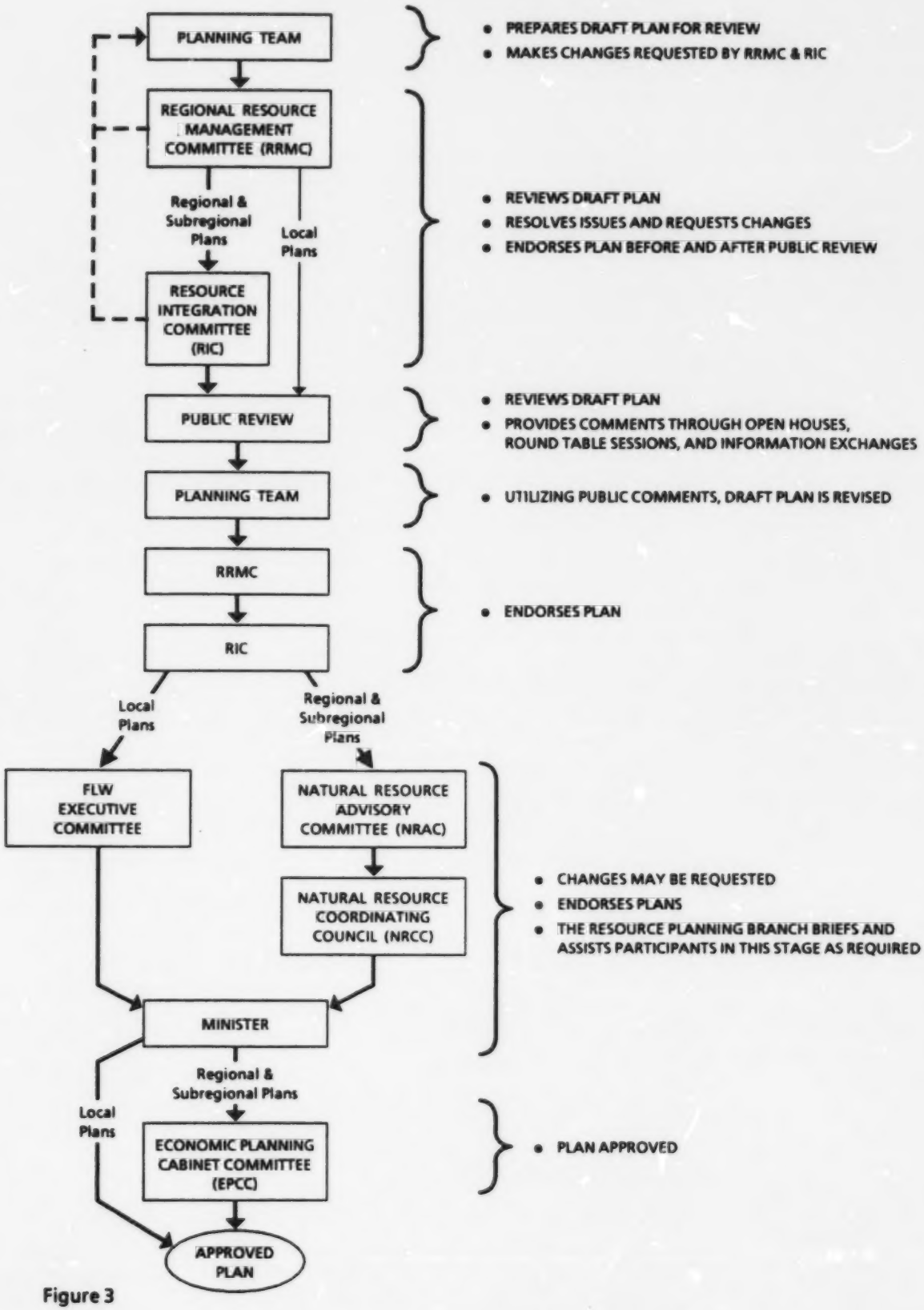

PLANNING TEAM
REGIONAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (RRMC)
Regional & Subregional Plans
Local Plans
RESOURCE INTEGRATION COMMITTEE (RIC)
PUBLIC REVIEW
PLANNING TEAM
RRMC
RIC
Local Plans
Regional & Subregional Plans
FLW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
NATURAL RESOURCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (NRAC)
NATURAL RESOURCE COORDINATING COUNCIL (NRCC)
MINISTER
Regional & Subregional Plans
Local Plans
ECONOMIC PLANNING CABINET COMMITTEE (EPCC)
APPROVED PLAN
• PREPARES DRAFT PLAN FOR REVIEW
• MAKES CHANGES REQUESTED BY RRMC & RIC
• REVIEWS DRAFT PLAN
• RESOLVES ISSUES AND REQUESTS CHANGES
• ENDORSES PLAN BEFORE AND AFTER PUBLIC REVIEW
• REVIEWS DRAFT PLAN
• PROVIDES COMMENTS THROUGH OPEN HOUSES, ROUND TABLE SESSIONS, AND INFORMATION EXCHANGES
• UTILIZING PUBLIC COMMENTS, DRAFT PLAN IS REVISED
• ENDORSES PLAN
• CHANGES MAY BE REQUESTED
• ENDORSES PLANS
• THE RESOURCE PLANNING BRANCH BRIEFS AND ASSISTS PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STAGE AS REQUIRED
• PLAN APPROVED

Figure 3

land or resources. This committee is chaired by an assistant deputy minister from Alberta Environment.

The NRAC resolves substantial management or policy issues; reviews the implications of major policies on individual agency programs and objectives; and transforms broad policy statements into plans of action. It endorses and recommends integrated resource plans to the deputy minister committee level. The NRAC is the third level of review for IRPs. It is proposed that the NRAC will ratify the annual and long term priorities of the integrated resource planning program.

4. Natural Resources Coordinating Council (NRCC)[2]

The Natural Resources Coordinating Council (NRCC) is a deputy minister-level committee chaired by the Deputy Minister of Alberta Environment. It acts in a consultative and advisory capacity to government departments. The NRCC provides a vehicle for improving policy/program coordination and for resolving administrative, resource management land use and environmental conflicts.

The Deputy Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife presents the plan to the Council for consideration and recommends approval to the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife after the Council's support has been obtained. When required, the NRCC becomes involved in conflict resolution and policy interpretation as it relates to the integrated resource plans. The NRCC is the fourth level of review for IRPs.

5. Economic Planning Cabinet Committee (EPCC)

The Economic Planning Cabinet Committee (EPCC) is a ministerial-level committee currently chaired by the Minister of Energy. This Committee considers policies in the field of economic and resource development and their effects on the province within the established industrial strategy for the government. In that context, it develops policies on which to base the development and diversification of the economy of the province.

The Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife initiates the consideration of integrated resource plans by EPCC and requests their approval of the plan. As noted above, some integrated resource plans (normally local IRPs) do not warrant EPCC's approval, in which case the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife gives final approval. Once approved, the plan becomes the government's resource management policy for the planning area's public land and resources.

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[2] The name of this committee will be changed to the Sustainable Development Coordinating Council under the proposed Alberta Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.

## 3.0 CONCLUSION

Alberta's integrated resource planning process is recognized by both government agencies and the public as being an effective decision-making mechanism for the management of public land and resources. However, because it is both dynamic and flexible, the integrated resource process has been in a constant state of evolution since the 1970s and will continue to evolve into the 1990s. As demands and conditions change through the years, the planning program will adapt to meet the future challenges in resource management, and the expectations of participants, and continue to produce plans that are fair, responsive, practical and oriented towards the needs of Albertans, both now and in the future.